

1ST ARMORED DIVISION
AMERICA'S TANK DIVISION

The Old Ironsides Report

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WOMEN WARRIORS

Story and photo by Spc. Michael Rivera
407th Forward Support Battalion

BAGHDAD, Iraq—Prior to the late 1970s, females in the U.S. Army were relegated to “ladies” jobs, such as nursing or administration, and they were assigned to their own separate and distinct piece of the Army called the Women’s Army Corps. Very few females were involved in dealing with soldiers, and only a few made a name for themselves for the courageous acts they performed during battle.

Since the late 70s, when the WAC was disbanded, and women were integrated into the Army mainstream, an increasing number of Military Occupational Specialties have opened up to women.

The “melting pot” effect of female integration within the Army can be seen in the 407th Forward Support Battalion. Of the 41 different jobs available in the forward support battalion, including Armament Systems Repair, Automotive Systems Repair, Welding, Ammunition Handling and Combat Medic, not one excludes women.

Of the 3,800 soldiers in the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division, there are only 67 females. Although most of these females are assigned to the FSB, many of them actually execute their duties within the battle space of the infantry battalions, such as our combat medics and truck drivers.

Although female integration has taken place very deliberately over the past 25 years, there are still some growing pains. Pfc. Molly Gilbert, armament repair specialist, Company B, 407th FSB, Seattle, Wa., expressed the challenges she encountered upon first arriving at the unit.

“There are not many females in my MOS dealing with airborne infantrymen on a daily basis,” Gilbert stated. “It made it difficult initially, because they were not used to seeing female soldiers working on their weapons. They did not trust me initially until I proved to them I knew my job.”

Since deploying with the unit to Kuwait and Iraq to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, Gilbert has inspected and repaired more than 800 weapons for the 82nd Airborne Division’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division in Baghdad, Iraq.

Aside from the high expectations of her fellow troopers, Gilbert also feels the expectations of her family. Gilbert’s family members were initially non-supportive due to perceived harshness of the military environment.

Soldiers like Gilbert have said that because of serving in combat the past 5 ½ months in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, families are less hesitant at expressing their negativity and are more outspoken in their pride for their sisters, daughters and grand daughters.

“My father said that I was making my family’s name earn respect,” said Spc. Arlyne Betancourt, medical specialist, 628th Forward Surgical Team, under the operational control of Co. C, 407th FSB.

A native of San Antonio, Tx., Betancourt feels she has always been treated as an equal by her male peers.

Spc. Maritza Collins, administrative specialist, from Dayton, Oh., is a perfect example of a female who holds a “typically male” job. Although her primary duties are in the Battalion Personnel and Administration Center, she also serves as the Battalion Executive Officer’s driver.

For the most part, drivers are generally males; not for any specific reason, but it just happens that way, said Collins. One of her male counterparts from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade, expressed how surprised he was when he found out she was the driver for the battalion’s second in command.

Spc. Shirley Baez, ammunition handling specialist, Co. A, 407th FSB, expressed that her family feels she is very brave and knows how helpful this is for her future. Originally from New York, NY, Baez totes ammunition, as heavy as 110 lbs., far-forward and in the nastiest conditions alongside male peers.



2nd Lt. Wendy Jublou, of Bellevue, Mi, carries medical supplies for an Iraqi medical clinic in southern Baghdad. Jublou, with Company C, 407th Forward Support Battalion, supports the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“My MOS is physically hard, but I can hang with any of my male counterparts,” she said.

2nd Lt. Wendy Jublou, medical service officer, has an additional duty in Company C, 407th FSB. As the brigade’s medical supply officer, the Bellevue, Mi. native leads convoys to pick-up medical supplies from different locations, with some locations as far as 80 kilometers from the brigade support area where she is based.

The routes cover all sorts of neighborhoods, good and bad, said Jublou. As the convoy commander, she understands her responsibility to lead soldiers safely throughout the entire combat operation.

Aside from female soldiers holding positions historically given to males, there are also duties female soldiers perform that were normally performed by males, like military parachutist, a separate skill identifier that is attained in addition to an occupational specialty.

Capt. Rose Kirby, Combat Health Support Officer for the brigade’s Task Force Falcon, planned and managed the medical support for Operation Iraqi Freedom conducting several combat operations from March to the present. She is manifested on the “Alpha-Echelon” of any parachute assault the unit might undertake in the future, meaning Kirby, a native of Los Angeles, Ca., is on the first wave of the assault.

“I’m fully aware of the impact my medical planning can have on soldiers on the battlefield,” said Kirby. “This is why I take my job very seriously. Soldiers’ lives depend on it”.

Lt. Col. Jeffrey Douville, commander, 407th FSB, is unequivocal in his support of Kirby, “Her mental and physical toughness is unbelievable,” he explained.

Sgt. Lovella Bell has been attached to the 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment since the Battle of As Samawah in early April.

Lt. Col. John Castles, battalion commander of the Blue Falcons, regards Bell, “truly outstanding . . . She fits right in with my infantrymen”.

Bell, from Buena Park, Ca. said, “I feel like I experienced the medic aspect of medicine, something females usually don’t have the opportunity to do.”

Despite the continuing debate asking whether women are fit to serve in combat, the fact is that women have been serving in combat zones for many years and continue to serve today.

News

U.S. Hits Iraqi Insurgents After Blast

NASIRIYAH, Iraq (AP) - A suicide bomber blew up a truck packed with explosives at an Italian paramilitary base Wednesday, killing at least 26 people. The United States struck at the Iraqi insurgency hours later, destroying a warehouse in Baghdad and chasing attackers who were seen firing mortars. The Nasiriyah attack was the deadliest against an American ally since the occupation began and appeared to send a message that international groups are not safe anywhere in Iraq. It came on the same day the chief U.S. administrator for Iraq went to the White House to put forth proposals on transferring more authority to the Iraqis.

Judge Keeps Death Option in Sniper Case

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (AP) - Despite little proof that John Allen Muhammad pulled the trigger, the judge at his trial refused to take the death penalty off the table Wednesday, saying the evidence suggests he and fellow sniper suspect Lee Boyd Malvo worked together. The prosecution's case indicates "they were involved in purposeful shootings," Circuit Judge LeRoy F. Millette Jr. said with the jury out of the room. "They perfected their ability to shoot people. They perfected their ability to escape."

Limbaugh to Resume Hosting Radio Show

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) - Rush Limbaugh will return to his radio talk show Monday after completing a five-week treatment program for his addiction to painkillers, his brother said Wednesday. David Limbaugh made the announcement to Internet personality Matt Drudge, who was sitting in Wednesday for the conservative commentator.

McKeon, Pena Named MLB Managers of Year

NEW YORK (AP) - Jack McKeon calls himself an "old goat." He can add "wise." The 72-year-old manager of the Florida Marlins was voted NL Manager of the Year for the second time after transforming a last-place team into a World Series champion.

Sports

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Oddly Enough

Wedding bells to ring on Indian mobile phones

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Indians hunting for a sweetheart can now dispatch their profiles by mobile telephone to a Web site that promises to generate compatible matches. A marriage portal seeking to tap India's surging population of 25 million mobile phone users launched a new SMS text messaging service on Wednesday. Most marriages are arranged either through relatives or newspaper advertisements in the nation of more than one billion people who continue to be traditional in such matters, despite the inroads of modernity in large cities. And mobile phones are all the rage, with people using them to do business or merely to make a fashion statement. Analysts expect the number of mobile users to reach 100 million by 2005. "Indians are such heavy users of SMS, so finding a life partner through a mobile was a logical extension," J. Murugavel, chief executive of Web site BharatMatrimony.com, which launched the service, told a conference. "We've called it 'Fifty-Fifty' because you are one half and are looking for the other half." Murugavel said he expected a million people to sign up for his service within six months. But the launch of an MMS or picture message service providing users with glimpses of prospective matches, will have to wait three months more, since few mobiles are set up for it.

This Day in History

Naval Battle of Guadalcanal Rages, 1942

On this day, the most furious sea battle of the Solomon Islands began. Led by two battleships, a Japanese force came down "the Slot"—the passage between the adjacent islands of Rabaul and Guadalcanal—and delivered a heavy shelling attack on a much smaller American task force. The clash raged through the night, when smaller, more maneuverable American ships took advantage of the thick blanket of darkness. At times, the American ships drew so close to the enemy fleet that they had trouble depressing their guns. When the battle finally simmered down on the fifteenth, the Americans had claimed a moral victory. The Japanese battleship Hiei was heavily damaged and had been scuttled by its crew. It was the first Japanese battleship lost in the war. However, the U.S. lost two cruisers, including the torpedoed Juneau, the sinking of which took the lives of five brothers from Waterloo, Iowa, the Sullivans. American journalists devoured the Sullivan brothers story, and a destroyer being built at that time in a San Francisco shipyard was named The Sullivans in their honor. Also, after their deaths, Navy regulations were changed so that close relatives could not serve on board the same ship.

From HistoryChannel.com

Safety Tip

ADHERE TO STANDARDS

- ✓ **Standards Are Developed From Experience**
- ✓ **Standards Apply To Everyone**
- ✓ **Failure To Comply With Standards Cause Injury Or Death**
- ✓ **Be The Standard**